

As you may have heard on the news, Congress and President Obama are locked in a dispute on how long to extend the temporary cut in the payroll tax, unemployment insurance, and the so-called “doc fix” that prevents a major cut in reimbursement payments to physicians with Medicare patients.

At the request of President Obama, the House has passed legislation that extends the payroll tax relief and federal unemployment insurance for one year, while providing a two-year “doc fix.” The House measure fully pays for these provisions by cutting spending elsewhere. The Senate has passed a measure that extends these important policies for only two months. This week the House passed a resolution calling for a conference committee to resolve the differences between the House and Senate bills. The House appointed our conferees, but unfortunately the Senate left town without doing the same. Meanwhile, the President has refused to urge the Senate to return to our nation’s capital to resolve the differences.

Let there be no doubt – I and the vast majority of members of the House believe these policies should be extended in a responsible manner. But a mere two-month extension gives no certainty or stability to American workers, taxpayers, employers, and health care providers. Congress needs to end the practice of passing haphazard short-term laws in place of taking the time to do the right thing for the American people. The Constitution lays out a simple process—the conference committee—for resolving differences between House and Senate measures. We should follow this process today, and that means the Senate should return to our nation’s capital to do the people’s work.